

# News Release



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## ALL-AROUND POSITIVE SPRING MEET AT CHURCHILL DOWNS

***Record Prize-Money, Large Fields, High Quality, Bigger Payouts, Unforgettable Moments Top Season***

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Friday, July 5, 2019)** – In the face of a fiercely-debated Kentucky Derby result that triggered national conversation for weeks, Churchill Downs Racetrack delivered all-around positive results – from record prize-money for horsemen to large fields, high-quality participants and bigger payouts for bettors – during its 145<sup>th</sup> Spring Meet, which concluded an action-packed, nine-week run on Saturday, June 29.

Thanks to robust business from state-of-the-art historical racing machines at nearby **Derby City Gaming** purses were supercharged for the 2019 Spring Meet, and a record \$32.2 million was paid to horsemen during the popular 38-day stand that ran April 27-June 29. It was a significant 44.7% or \$9.9 million increase from the \$22.2 million paid over last year's Spring Meet.

Derby City Gaming opened last year in mid-September at nearby 4520 Poplar Level Road after Churchill Downs Incorporated made a \$65 million investment to construct a facility that features nearly 1,000 historical racing machines, two restaurants, a center bar and multiple entertainment options.

“As promised, our investment into Derby City Gaming is paying immediate dividends and directly benefiting the city of Louisville and Commonwealth of Kentucky,” said **Kevin Flanery**, President of Churchill Downs Racetrack. “We’ve improved our state’s valuable horse racing and agriculture industry with lucrative rewards for horsemen. The result was a thriving and ultra-competitive racing product with more entries and high-quality horses that appealed to bettors and horseplayers nationwide.”

“This year’s Spring Meet was fantastic on all fronts. The horse owners, jockeys and trainers provided outstanding competition on the racetrack, and passionate members of our invaluable Churchill Downs Racetrack team were committed to delivering the best guest experience in entertainment. We express our sincerest gratitude to all horseplayers and the greater Louisville community who made the 2019 Spring Meet one of the most enjoyable and successful meets in Churchill Downs history.”

Spring Meet prize-money for horsemen averaged \$846,393 daily compared to \$584,796 in 2018. When excluding the lucrative Kentucky Derby week purse offerings, \$601,408 was paid daily over the final eight weeks of the meet versus \$408,796 last year. The average purse per race was \$86,459 compared to last season’s \$59,737.

As a result, the average field size grew. Churchill Downs lured 3,148 starters for its 372 races for a strong average of 8.5 horses per race, an 8.8% increase from the 7.8 starters-per-race average at the 2018 Spring Meet.

With increased purses, quality and field size, all-sources wagering on Churchill Downs’ Spring Meet races soared to \$499.8 million, a \$51.0 million jump from 2018’s \$448.8 million. The double-digit 11.4% increase marked the fifth straight annual gain in Spring Meet betting from the prior year.

With more horses and stiff competition in each race, the average pari-mutuel returns to horseplayers also increased. The average \$2 win payoff during the Spring Meet was \$13.52 compared to \$10.92 in 2018 – a 23.8% increase. Also, there were double-digit profit gains for bettors in most all other betting pools, including average \$2 Exacta payouts, which were up 49% from \$72.62 in 2018 to a whopping \$108.22 this year.

The 2019 Spring Meet most certainly will be remembered for an unforgettable, unprecedeted and rain-soaked 145<sup>th</sup> renewal of the \$3 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Woodford Reserve (Grade I) when 9-2 second betting choice **Maximum Security** (6-4-1-0—\$679,400) was disqualified from first by **Kentucky Horse Racing Commission** stewards. After a 22-minute post-race review by the presiding officials, they determined that the front-running colt ridden by **Luis Saez** had interfered with multiple horses around the final turn and 65-1 runner-up **Country House** (7-2-2-1—\$2,120,175) was promoted to the winner – a weighty decision that resulted in the Kentucky Derby's first in-race disqualification in history.

The verdict provided owners **Mrs. J. V. (Maury) Shields Jr., E.J.M. (Guinness) McFadden Jr.** and **LNJ Foxwoods** (Larry, Nanci and Jaime Roth), Hall of Fame trainer **Bill Mott** and French-born jockey **Flavien Prat** with their first Kentucky Derby victories.

Wagering on the 14-race Kentucky Derby Day program totaled a North American record \$250.9 million. The Kentucky Derby alone attracted \$165.5 million in handle, including \$4.1 million from bettors in Japan, who were able to bet on the Derby for the first time thanks to the Japan Road to the Kentucky Derby participation of **Master Fencer (Jpn)**. A day-long threat of rain limited the on-track crowd to 150,729 but TV viewership on **NBC** peaked at an impressive 18.5 million viewers and the NBC Sports app and NBCSports.com delivered a record Average Minute Audience of 130,400 viewers.

Derby Week as a whole was tremendously successful. All-sources handle rose to a record \$343.0 million for the six-day stretch from April 27-May 4 and total attendance was 360,237, including a record “Thurby” crowd of 48,212.

Oaks Day wagering also reached record levels as \$60.2 million was bet on the 12-race Friday afternoon card with 105,719 on hand to watch **Joel Politi’s Serengeti Empress** (9-5-1-0—\$1,167,120) lead every step of the way in the \$1.25 million Longines Kentucky Oaks (GI) to give veteran local trainer **Tom Amoss** and New York-based jockey **Jose Ortiz** their first victories in America’s most lucrative and prestigious race for 3-year-old fillies.

Many of the sport’s equine stars shined at Churchill Downs on Oaks and Derby days, including **Bricks and Mortar** (11-9-0-2—\$4,303,650) in the \$1 million Old Forester Turf Classic (GI), **Mitole** (11-8-2-1—\$1,642,910) in the \$500,000 Churchill Downs Presented by TwinSpires.com (GI), **McKinzie** (11-6-4-0—\$1,703,560) in the \$400,000 Alysheba Presented by Sentient Jet (GII), **Mia Mischief** (15-7-6-0—\$957,540) in the \$500,000 Humana Distaff (GI) and **World of Trouble** (13-9-2-1—\$1,263,300) in the \$250,000 Twin Spires Turf Sprint Presented by MassMutual (GII).

Others who shined include **She’s a Julie** (14-6-2-2—\$902,880) in the \$500,000 La Troienne Presented by Inside Access from Chase (GI), **Beau Recall (Ire)** (23-6-6-0—\$870,512) in the \$400,000 Longines Churchill Distaff Turf Mile (GII), **Mr. Money** (8-3-2-0—\$491,220) in the \$400,000 Pat Day Mile Presented by LG&E and KU (GIII), **Digital Age (Ire)** (3-3-0-0—\$284,760) in the \$400,000 American Turf Presented by Ram Trucks (GII), **Break Even** in the \$250,000 Eight Belles Presented by Derby City Gaming (GII) and **Concrete Rose** (5-4-0-0—\$418,650), who defeated heavy favorite **Newspaperofrecord (IRE)** (5-3-2-0—\$795,750) in the \$250,000 Edgewood Presented by Forcht Bank (GIII).

**A Little Bit of Me** (Unbridled Sidney) **Jo Jo Air** (William Walker) **Rookie Salsa** (Kentucky Juvenile), **Siem Riep** (Opening Verse) and **Sonneteer** (Champions Day Marathon) also won Derby Week stakes races.

Other highpoints during the Spring Meet, which featured a 35-race stakes schedule, included victories in Breeders’ Cup “Win and You’re In” races by Grade I-winning homebreds **Seeking the Soul** and **Elate** on the June 15 “Downs After Dark Presented by Budweiser” nighttime racing program, which were broadcast live on **NBCSN**.

**Seeking the Soul** (27-7-6-7—\$3,335,802) prevailed in a thrilling three-horse stretch battle with **Quip** (9-4-2-1—\$1,054,100) and **Tom’s d’Etat** (12-6-2-1—\$661,892) to win the \$600,000 Stephen Foster Presented by GE Appliances (GII) by a neck. Hall of Fame jockey **John Velazquez** rode the 6-year-old for owner **Charles Fipke** and trainer **Dallas Stewart**. Santa Anita Handicap (GI) winner **Gift Box**, who invaded from Southern California, finished fourth as the 2-1 favorite.

**Claiborne Farm and Adele B. Dilschneider**’s 5-year-old mare **Elate** (15-6-5-2—\$1,698,775), ridden by Ortiz and trained by Mott, powered past **Blue Prize (Arg)** (19-7-8-2—\$1,162,253) and **She’s a Julie** to capture the \$250,000 Fleur de Lis Presented by Budweiser (GII).

Both **Seeking the Soul** and **Elate** earned spots in the Breeders’ Cup Classic and Distaff, respectively, at Santa Anita on Nov. 2.

Other stakes winners that night were **March to the Arch** (13-5-2-1—\$429,514) in the \$250,000 Wise Dan (GII); **Mr. Money** in the \$150,000 Matt Winn (GIII); **Hard Legacy** (5-3-0-0—\$164,500) in the \$150,000 Regret (GIII); and **RB Texas Hold Em** (10-5-1-3—\$101,300) in the \$100,000 President of the UAE Cup Sponsored by the UAE Ministry of Presidential Affairs (GI) for Arabian 4-year-olds and up.

Betting on the attractive 11-race Stephen Foster nighttime card totaled more than \$12.5 million, a 16.7% increase from last year's \$10.7 million.

Mr. Money, winner of the Pat Day Mile and Matt Winn, was one of two horses who won two stakes races at the meet. The other was Mia Mischief, who returned from her Derby Day victory in the Humana Distaff (GI) to defeat **Awestruck** (21-4-6-2—\$330,428) and swift Pimlico track record-holder **Covfefe** (5-3-0-1—\$208,300) in a thrilling renewal of the \$120,000 Roxelana Overnight Stakes on June 22.

Overall, 28 horses won two races at the meet but none scored a third victory. In addition to Mia Mischief and Mr. Money, \$100,000 meet-earners who won multiple times were **Magic Dance**, **Wilbo**, **Ry's the Guy**, **Super Comet**, **Twelfth Labour** and **With Dignity**, the half-sister to multiple graded stakes-winner **McCraken**.

Additional Grade III stakes winners at the meet were **Honey Bunny** (Winning Colors), **Mom's On Strike** (Old Forester Mint Julep), **Phantom Boss** (Bashford Manor) and **Tiz a Slam** (Louisville). **Change of Control** (Mamzelle), **Extravagant Kid** (Mighty Beau), **Gentle Ruler** (Keertana), **Line Judge** (Kelly's Landing), **Magic Dance** (Debutante) and **Wilbo** (Aristides) also won stakes events.

Horses that seemingly ran fast and recorded top speed figures include first-level allowance winner **Explorer**, classy turf sprinters **Om** and **Morticia**, promising turf sprinter **Leinster**, comeback stakes winner **Dot Matrix**, and promising 2-year-olds **Hop Kat**, **Halfmoon Reef**, **By Your Side**, **Noose** and the filly **Frank's Rockette**.

In arguably the strongest and deepest jockey colony in Churchill Downs history, **Corey Lanerie** (209-43-26-26—\$2,399,496) earned his 17<sup>th</sup> Churchill Downs riding title with 43 trips to the Woodford Reserve Winner's Circle, 14 more victories than runner-up **Miguel Mena** (212-29-27-33—\$1,508,664), who enjoyed his most lucrative Spring Meet after being sidelined for most of 2018 from a crushed heel and fractured ankle. **Julien Leparoux** (145-27-19-14—\$1,692,365) was third and was followed by **Brian Hernandez Jr.** (182-25-23-21—\$1,645,745) and the meet's earnings leader **Ricardo Santana Jr.** (176-25-31-28—\$2,730,184), who also led all jockeys with five stakes wins.

Seven of the nation's Top 20 money-earning jockeys were based at Churchill Downs this spring: Santana, Preakness Stakes winner **Tyler Gaffalione** (162-24-27-17—\$1,544,392), **Florent Geroux** (130-20-21-25—\$1,379,245), Lanerie, Leparoux, **Gabriel Saez** (185-24-30-25—\$1,779,126) and Hernandez.

Other riders who notched double-digit wins during the Spring Meet: **Adam Beschizza** (136-19-19-17—\$1,144,594), Kentucky newcomer **Tyler Baze** (148-16-15-9—\$870,815), **James Graham** (155-15-20-17—\$976,095), **Shaun Bridgmohan** (68-12-8-10—\$1,077,962) and **Chris Landeros** (136-11-10-13—\$779,695).

In the trainer standings, it was no surprise to see **Steve Asmussen** (181-28-32-24—\$2,971,828) atop the leaderboard for a record-extending 21<sup>st</sup> time. The Hall of Fame trainer saddled a lofty 181 horses – an average of 4.8 horses per day and a record total for a 38-day Spring Meet – and won 28 races to beat **Eddie Kenneally** (61-18-10-8—\$926,666) by 10.

Asmussen – this year's national earnings leader with more than \$13.5 million – won four races on Kentucky Derby Day, a feat achieved at Churchill Downs for the first time since 2013 and only the seventh time since 1991 (four times for Asmussen). Two of those victories came in Grade I events: the Humana Distaff with Mia Mischief and the Churchill Downs Stakes with Mitole. One day earlier, he won the Grade I La Troienne with She's a Julie. Overall, Asmussen led all trainers with five stakes wins at the Spring Meet.

Asmussen finished the meet with 704 Churchill Downs wins – he saddled his 700<sup>th</sup> local winner on June 22 with **Rocky Tough** – and is poised to pounce on the track's all-time win leaders, **Dale Romans** (729) and Mott (715), who won five and four races at the meet, respectively. He also is within 1,000 career wins of the sport's all-time leading trainer **Dale Baird**, who made 9,445 trips to the winner's circle.

Behind Asmussen and Kenneally in the trainer standings were Louisville native **Brad Cox** (55-16-11-10—\$1,245,708), **Mike Maker** (81-14-14-8—\$684,546), Amoss (52-12-5-10—\$1,142,437), Stewart (62-12-5-4—\$939,596), **Joe Sharp** (66-10-7-6—\$569,512), **Ian Wilkes** (74-10-4-5—\$714,047), **Rusty Arnold** (46-8-7-6—\$776,631) and **Greg Foley** (49-8-7-7—\$377,933).

Other outfits who won multiple races and had a win-percentage above 20% were **Al Stall Jr.** (30-7-5-6—\$530,467), **Rodolphe Brisset** (23-5-2-1—\$287,551), **Norm Casse** (15-4-2-1—\$228,691), **“Scooter” Dickey** (13-3-2-3—\$72,980), **Grant Forster** (12-3-2-3—\$84,630), **Jimmy DiVito** (15-3-1-2—\$197,921), Eclipse Award-winner **Chad Brown** (13-3-1-1—\$1,025,618), **Mike Lauer** (13-3-0-1—\$57,305), **Paulo Lobo** (8-3-0-1—\$82,137), **Paul McEntee** (6-2-1-0—\$58,077), **Karl Broberg** (10-2-0-0—\$36,693) and **Denis Roberson** (5-2-0-0—\$35,385).

Following a second-place finish at the \$50,000 claiming level, owners **Ken and Sarah Ramsey** dropped **Artemus Bridge** in for a \$20,000 tag on the penultimate day of the meet and the 3-year-old prevailed late in the stretch to give the Nicholasville, Ky. couple their sixth win of the meet, which tied **Brad Kelley’s Calumet Farm** and **Maggi Moss** for leading owner honors.

For the Ramseys (34-6-5-3—\$242,040), it was their record-extending 31<sup>st</sup> crown at Churchill Downs and they increased their all-time local win total to 496 – just four victories shy of the 500-win milestone.

Legendary Calumet Farm (46-6-4-5—\$420,407) notched their 10<sup>th</sup> Churchill Downs title as top owners and second in Kelley’s tenure. Moss (19-6-1-3—\$127,545) collected her sixth local trophy.

The trio was followed in the standings by **Chester Thomas’ Allied Racing Stable** (11-4-2-2—\$450,662), **G. Watts Humphrey Jr.** (36-4-7-3—\$446,808), **Steve Landers Racing** (9-4-2-2—\$230,648), Mike Sisk’s **M and M Racing** (41-4-5-7—\$168,742) and **Janis Whitham’s Whitham Thoroughbreds** (10-4-0-1—\$197,803).

Seven other ownerships won three races at the meet: **Bob Lothenbach’s Lothenbach Stables** (19-3-4-2—\$296,592), Joel Politi (5-3-1-0—\$743,301), **Paula Haughey’s PTK LLC** (16-3-2-3—\$114,918), **Richard Rigney’s Rigney Racing** (27-3-3-3—\$184,987), Kevin Plank’s **Sagamore Farm** (24-3-2-4—\$165,149), **Wayne Sanders and Larry Hirsch** (8-3-1-1—\$142,776) and **Kiki Courtelis’ Town and Country Racing** (6-3-0-1—\$100,805).

Artemus Bridge, who was claimed June 28 by owner **Thomas Lamarca** and trainer **Marvin Curtsinger** in a meet-high 30-way shake, was one of 312 horses that were purchased through claiming races during the Spring Meet for a total of \$6,832,000. The numerous transactions produced \$409,920 in sales tax revenue for the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Overall, there were 44.4% more claims this year than last season’s 216 and the total purchase prices rose 47.9% from 2018’s \$4,619,500.

In addition to the stellar racing, “Downs After Dark Presented by Budweiser” remained popular attractions with Saturday night crowds of 17,151 on June 2 for a celebration of Woodstock’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with “Peace, Love & Horse Racing” and 19,481 for Stephen Foster Night and a New Orleans-inspired theme of “The Big Easy” that included a performance by **The Dirty Dozen Brass Band**. Other events that proved to be popular with on-track guests: Mother’s Day on May 12, Family Adventure Day Presented by Kroger on May 19 and June 23 and the continued growth of Twilight Thursdays Presented by Blue Moon with eight-race program at 5 p.m. which featured \$1 Blue Moon drafts, \$1 domestic draft beer, food trucks, lawn games, one-on-one expert betting advice and live music on the Plaza Stage.

Racing in Kentucky has shifted to Ellis Park but Churchill Downs will remain open for training daily and simulcast wagering on the second floor of the Clubhouse every Wednesday-Sunday throughout the summer. Live horse racing action will return Friday, Sept. 13 for the seventh annual 11-date September Meeting, which will continue through Sept. 29. Also scheduled later this year is the Fall Meet, which will run over 26 days from Oct. 27-Dec. 1.

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